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SERMON

OF THE

Nativity of Our Lord.

Preach'd before the

King and Queen

At WHITE-HALL. 1687.

By *Bonaventure Giffard*, Doctor of Sorbon, Chaplain in Ordinary, and Preacher to Their MAJESTIES.

Publish'd by his Majesties Command.

L O N D O N,

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O F T H E

Nativity of Our Lord

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Gloria in altissimis Deo, & in terrâ Pax Homi-
nibus bonæ voluntatis.

*Glory in the Higheſt to God, and in Earth, Peace
to Men of good Will.*

*Theſe Words were ſung by a full Choire of An-
gels at the Birth of our Saviour, as we find
related by St. Luke c. 2. v. 14.*

A Stable ! A Manger ! A little Hay ! Some
poor Swadling Bands ! A helpleſs Infant !
A deſolate young Maid ! An Ox ! An Aſs ! What
great

great Matter of *Glory to God*, or Subject of so much Joy to the *Angels*? What is there in all this poor *Equipage*, that should deserve to call down these Noble *Spirits* from *Heaven*, to solemnize it's Triumphs upon Earth? *Ob God!* How different are thy Judgments from those of *Men*? And by how opposit Ways dost thou seek thy *Glory*, from those which *Men* take to establish Theirs? *Men* place all their Glory in great Riches, magnificent Houses, brave Apparel, sumptuous Entertainments, numerous Attendants, and such like Supports of their Vanity and Misery. But all the *Glory God Almighty* designs to draw from the great Work of the Worlds *Redemption*; behold, he grounds it on the Poverty, Humility, and abjection of His *eternal Son*. Hence, as you see, for his Royal *Pallace*, he has provided him a ruinous *Stable*; for his *Bed of State*, a hard *Manger*; for his Noble and numerous *Attendants*, an *Ox*, an *Ass*, or at best, some few poor *Shepherds*. In fine, Instead of mighty *Treasures*, and great plenty of all Things, the utmost extremity of *Poverty*.

This, *Christians*, this is the conduct *Almighty God* has us'd with his *eternal Son*, at his first coming into the *World*: This is the Method
he

he has taken to purchase that *Glory* to himself; to give that *Peace* and *Joy* to Men, which the *Angels* this day publish to the World in their *Christmasts* Carol, of *Gloria in altissimis Deo, & in terrâ Pax Hominibus bonæ voluntatis.* Luke 2. 14.

Divine Spirit! enlighten my Mind, inspire my Thoughts, help me to apprehend the design of thy *Eternal Wisdom* in this astonishing *Mystery*. I beg this of Thee, by the Intercession of the *Virgin Mother*, who this Day brought forth that heavenly *Child*, which She conceiv'd by the Operation of thy *Virtue*, at the same time that the Angel saluted Her.

Ave Maria, &c.

*Glory in the Highest to God, and in Earth
peace to Men of good will.*

The *Glory* which Almighty God had in the *World* before the coming of our Saviour, seems to have been much eclips'd, and reduc'd to a very small Point; for the *Devil*, who no sooner became his *Enemy*, but also turn'd his *Rival*; since he could not become like to *God* in *Heaven*, resolv'd at least to be ador'd for God upon *Earth*: And thence (as *St. Gregory Nazianzen* observes,) he has endeavor'd to
possess

possess that *Divinity* in the Opinion of *Men*, which he could not steal from the uncommunicable Nature of his *Maker*. *Qui Divinitatem in Cælis habere non potuit, in Terris habere conatus est.*

And indeed, if the *Worship* of *Men* could encrease or lessen the *Majesty* of *God*; if his *Glory* were to be calculated by the number of his *Adorers*; one might thence think (which otherwise to imagin were a *Blasphemy*;) that *Lucifer* had got the upper hand: Since, if we reflect on the sad Condition the whole *World* was in, before the Birth of our *Saviour*; we shall find, that this proud and rebellious *Spirit* was more worship'd, more glorify'd by *Men*, than his *Sovereign Lord* and *Maker*. For if the true *God* was then worship'd by the *Jews*; false *Gods* were ador'd by all other *Nations*. If *God* had some zealous *Prophets* to pronounce his *Oracles*; the *Devil* had many *Idolatrous Priests* to publish his *Lies*. If *God* had an *Altar* consecrated to his Service in *Hierusalem*; the *Devil* had many *Temples* dedicated to his Honor throughout the rest of the *World*. If *God* was honor'd by the Sacrifice of *Beasts*; the *Devil* was worship'd by the Slaughter of *Men*. So that

that we are forc'd to own and lament, that before the coming of the *Messias*, the external *Glory* of *God*, (which consists in the Worship of *Men*,) was shut up within a narrow compass; confin'd to one little Corner of the *Earth*. *Notus in Judæa Dens.*

Psalm. 75.

But on this *Day*, *God* Almighty begins to do himself *right*; He has sent down his Eternal *Son* to vindicate his Honor, to establish his *Glory*, to subdue his proud *Rival*, to dispossess him of the *Empire* he had gain'd over the Minds of *Men*. *St. John*, the faithful *Interpreter* of his Designs, tells us, That 'tis for this the *Son of God* is come into the *World*, to destroy the Works of the Devil. *In hoc apparuit Filius Dei, ut dissolvat opera Diaboli.* 1 *John* 3. 8. And the *Way* he has taken to do this, is as strange in it self, as it has prov'd efficacious in the Effect.

The *Devil* grounded all his *Glory* on the deluded Imaginations of his *Followers*. To make them *Idolaters* of his false *Deity*; he first possess'd them with an erroneous Conceit of their own *Greatness*. To persuade them to offer Incense to the *Statu's* they had rais'd in his *Temples*, he first taught them to adore the *Idols* he had set up in their *Minds*; *Honor*,
Riches,

Riches, Pleasure, are the three great *Gods* he places on the *Altar* of their *Hearts*; to these, he makes them sacrifice all their *Thoughts*, all their *Affections*, their *Body*, their *Soul*, their *Eternity*, their *All*. He persuades them, that all their *Glory* consists in worldly *Greatness*, all their *Happiness* in an affluence of temporal *Riches*, and their chief *Beatitude* in a full enjoyment of sensual *Satisfactions*.

To destroy this *Work* of the *Devil*, to disabuse Men of these false Notions he had imbued them with, the *Son of God* is come into the *World* after the manner in which our present *Solemnity* represents him to us; to shew us, how little esteem we ought to make of all the *Glory* and *Greatness* of the *World*; He would become a *Child*, He would appear little and abject; to quench in us that ardent Thirst, we have after *Riches*; He has reduced himself to the greatest *Poverty* imaginable: To take out of our Hearts that inordinate Love of *Ease* and *Pleasure*; He begins his Life all in *Sufferings* and *Mortifications*.

'Tis thus that *Jesus Christ* most Successfully establishes the *Glory* of *God*, because 'tis thus that he most powerfully Triumphs over those *Vices* which keep Men Slaves to the *Devil*:

And

And hence, when the *Angels* saw him laid thus low in the *Manger*; then it was that they begun to sing *Glory* to God, and *Peace* to Men. *Glory* to God, because *Jesus* is come to cure our *Pride* by his *Humility*; our *Avarice* by his *Poverty*; our *Excesses* and *Intemperances* by his *Mortifications*. *Gloria in altissimis Deo*. *Peace* and *Joy* to Men of good will; to Men that are willing to learn of such a *Master*; to Men that are willing to be instructed by such an *Example*; to Men that are willing to be sav'd by such a *Saviour*. *Pax Hominibus bonæ voluntatis*. 'Tis thus the *Angels* divide their *Canticle*; and 'tis thus I shall divide my present *Discourse*. The First Part whereof shall shew you, what our *Saviour* did this Day for our Instruction; The Second, what we must learn from his Example. What *Jesus* did to be a *Saviour* to Men; what Men must do to be sav'd by *Jesus*. These two Points make the division of my Sermon, and Subject of your Attention.

The First Part.

If the *Union* of the eternal *God* to our human Nature, be astonishing; the manner of his
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coming

coming into the World is not a little surprizing ! For tho an excess of Goodness might have carry'd him to this strange Communication of himself ; tho the love of Men might have mov'd him to become *Man* ; yet methinks, he might have done it after the most honorable manner ; he might have appear'd at the full Stature of a Man, and accomplish'd with all the Perfections human Nature is capable of. But to Cloath himself with our *Mortality*, in its meanest Dress ; to shut himself up for nine Months in the *Bowels* of a *Woman* ; to come into the World under the Form of a *Child* ; to have Reason in it's highest Perfection, and yet to be reduc'd to the Condition of an *Infant* ; This is what astonisheth *Heaven* and *Earth* ; this is the admiration of *Angels* and *Men*.

And certainly, *Christians*, whosoever should reflect well on the *Majesty*, *Infinity*, *Immensity*, *Eternity*, and the rest of *Gods* glorious *Attributes*, and then should behold a *Child* newly brought into the World ; questionless, he would stand amaz'd, to think that the *Majesty* of *Heaven* should Inhabit within such an inconsiderable piece of *Flesh* ; that so boundless an *Ocean* should be shut up within so nar-

row a *Channel*, that the eternal *God* should become a *Child*. And yet thus it is, *Christians*, the great *God* of *Heaven* is become a *Child*; the *Antient* of *Days* is newly come into the *World*; the eternally begotten *Son* of the *Divine Father*, behold, he's born an *Infant*. *Parvulus natus est nobis, & Filius datus* Isa. 9. 6. *est nobis*.

Whatsoever therefore you have seen; whatsoever you imagin to be the Condition of other *Infants* at their *Birth*; think the same of your great *God*, for he is become exactly like them in all things, excepting only Sin. He's Heb. 4. 15. born Naked and Needy, like other *Infants*; Weak and Feeble, like others; He Weeps and Cry's like others; He's wrap'd in Swaddling Cloaths like others; He Feeds at his Mothers Breast like others, and something below the meanest Condition of all other *Infants*; instead of a *Cradle*, He is laid in a hard *Manger*, expos'd to the sharp Winds of a Winter Night, the Wants and Incommodities of a desolate Place. *Pannis eum involvit, & re-* Luke 2. 7. *clinavit in præsepio*.

O Blessed *Jesus*! how do's this poor Lodging suit with Thee, who hast *Heaven* for thy *Throne*, and the whole *Earth* for thy *Footstool*?

How do's this *Manger* agree with Thee, who reposest in the *Bosom* of thy Divine *Father*? How do these Tears become thee, who art the Joy of all the Angels in Heaven, and God of all Consolation here upon Earth? How do's this want of Cloaths, this need of a little Milk fall upon Thee, who feathere'st the Birds, feedest the Beasts, and art absolute Lord of the whole Universe?

Ah *Christians*! let us stop and pause here a while; let our Heart speak by it's Affections, what our Tongue cannot utter by Expressions; let us behold with a silent Astonishment, what we cannot discourse but with Admirations and Exclamations!

The great *God of Heaven* become a *Child*! the increated *Wisdom* and *Word of God*, *silent* and *speechless*! the *King of Glory* lodg'd in a *Stable*! the *Lord* of all things, in *Want* and *Poverty*!

Oh Heavens! What think you of this? Or rather, Dear Christians, (since 'tis for you He's born,) what think you of this? Why think you, has the great God of Heaven thus humbled himself upon Earth? Why did He choose to come into the World after this strange manner? I say, why did he *choose*?

For

For we must not imagin, that these Things happen'd thus by *chance*. 'Twas not the Unkindness and Inhumanity of the hard-hearted *Bethlemites* that forc'd him into a Stable. 'twas not their refusing his *Mother* a Lodging, that oblig'd him to lye in a *Manger*. Oh no! He that can soften the Hearts of *Tygers*, could have made his Mother find a Welcom amongst her own *Relations*. He that places *Kings* on the *Throne*, could have rais'd himself a *Palace* in the Fields of *Bethlehem*. 'Twas not therefore any want of Power or Forecast; 'twas not any Necessity, or chance that reduc'd him to this Condition. Other Infants indeed; have it not in their Power to choose the Time, the Place, and manner of their Birth; but this divine Child, had all these things at his own choice and disposal. And why then did he choose to be born in the depth of Winter, and obscurity of the Night? Why did he choose a Stable, a Manger, for his Lodging? Why did he call only poor *Shepherds*, to give him the first Welcom into the World? Ah! *St. Bernard* gives the true reason, when he tells us, All this was to confound the *Pride* and *Vanity* of the *World*; to condemn the *luxurious*
Ease

Ease, and Excesses of Men. *Cur stabulum Christus elegit? Plane ut reprobet Mundi gloriam, ut damnet sæculi Vanitatem.* To instruct us by *Example*, before he could teach us by *Words*; to convince us (say's St. *Augustin*) by his own Choice, what little Esteem we ought to have of all the Glory, Greatness, Riches, Poms and Pleasures of this Life; He contemn'd them all. *Omnia terrena bona contempsit Christus, ut contemnenda monstraret.*

He chose to be *poor*, that rich Men might not think themselves happy; He would not be *rich*, that poor Men might not think themselves miserable. He would want all that the World most esteems; He would suffer all that the World most abhors; that we should neither place our *Happiness* in the one, nor fear any *Adversity* from the other. *Ut nec in istis quæreretur felicitas, nec in istis timeretur adversitas.*

Christ saw that Men would lose the Glory of Heaven, by their ambitious Desires of Temporal Greatness; and therefore He made himself so little. Christ saw that Men would forfeit their eternal *Inheritance*, by fixing their Hearts so much on the Goods of the Earth; and therefore He appears so poor and

and indigent. Christ saw that Men would lose the Joy's of *Paradise*, by indulging their Ease and Pleasures in this Life; and therefore He chose to lye in a Manger. *Omnia terrena bona contempsit Christus, ut contemnenda monstraret.*

O my God! 'tis here I own the greatness both of thy Mercy, and our Misery; 'tis from the strangeness of this Remedy, that I come to understand the depth of our Wounds; *Ex consideratione remedii, periculi mei æstimo quantitatem.* Ah Christians! How dangerous was our Condition? How desperate was our Distemper, that stood in need of such a *Physician*? To what a heighth had our Pride carry'd us; that it should be necessary for the great God of *Heaven* to descend into a Stable to abate it? How strongly was our Heart fastn'd and wedded to the Riches and Pleasures of the *Earth*; that it should be necessary for the King of *Glory* to lye in a Manger, to disengage it? *Ex consideratione Remedii, periculi mei æstimo quantitatem.*

But, *Christians*, will all this suffice? Is the Remedy great enough for the Disease? Has *Jesus Christ* laid himself low enough for your Example? The great God of *Heaven* has made him-

St. Bern. Serm.
3. de Nativitate.

himself the least and lowest of Men: You great Ones of the Earth, will you thence learn to be *Humble*? You little Ones, will you leave to be *Envious* or *Ambitious*? The *King of Glory* has made himself the poorest of Men: You rich Ones of the World, will you learn not to set such a value on your Riches? You poor Men, will you learn not to repine for your Poverty, or murmur against Providence? The Author of all Bliss and Happiness, lies shivering in a cold and hard Manger: You delicate Christians of this Age, will you learn to Suffer?

Ah *Christians*! What can be more convincing, than these practical *Arguments* of our divine *Saviour*? What can be more persuasive, than the *Rhetoric* of this silent *Babe*? What can be more powerful than his Example, to disabuse Men of those false Notions, those wrong Idea's, which Opinion and Custom, the Principles and Practices of the World have fix'd in them?

For, *Christians*, if our *Sovereign Lord* and *Master* came thus into the World; if He that had it in his power to appear all in *Glory* and *Majesty*; if He that could have abounded with all Plenty and Magnificence; if He, I say,

say, chose the Poverty and Ignominy of a Stable; what follows then, but that terrible consequence St. *Bernard* draws from thence, *viz.* That either Christ is *mistaken*, or the World is in a great *Error*; either Christ knew not how to make a good choice, or Men are convinc'd to make a very bad one: *Aut Christus fallitur, aut Mundus errat.* Christ made choice of Poverty, and Men fly it as the greatest Misery. Christ chose to be in want, and Men seek nothing but Plenty; Christ chose to appear Little and Abject, and Men strive all they can to grow Great and Glorious; Christ chose to lye hid in the obscurity of a dark Night, and Men seek all Means to publish and proclaim themselves to the World: Christ chose to be born in the depth of Winter, to lodge in a cold Stable, a hard Manger; and Men seek nothing but the Ease, Commodity, and satisfaction of their Body. Oh! how contrary is their Choice? How opposit are their Ways? They are in two Extremes; they cannot both be in the right; there- *S. Bern.* fore, either Christ is deceiv'd, or Men are under a great mistake. *Aut Christus fallitur, aut Mundus errat.*

And what think you, my belov'd *Brethren*? For whom will you pronounce? Is *Jesus Christ* in the right? Has the eternal *Wisdom* of *Heaven* made a good Choice here upon *Earth*? Do you approve of His Choice? Do you approve of His coming into the World, after that poor manner in which our *Solemnity* represents Him unto you? Do's his Stable, his Manger, his poor and low Condition please you?

If you approve of his Judgment in making such a Choice, why then do you govern your selves by such opposit *Maxims*? If you like his *Ways*, why are you so unwilling to tread in his *Steps*? If you esteem the Poverty and Humility of the *Infant Jesus*, why do you so greedily thirst after the Riches and Honors of the *World*?

Alas! 'tis here that we Christians too often imitate the *Jews*, who had a high Esteem, a great Veneration for their *Messias*, whilst he was at a distance; whilst they beheld him in their glorious *Prophecies*; but when he came amongst them, they would not take notice of him. The longing expectation of so many *Ages*, the desir'd of all *Nations*, the so much wish'd for *Messias*; when He came
into

into the World, they would not know Him, because of the low and abject Condition he appear'd in. *In Mundo erat, & Mundus eum* Joan 1. 10.
non cognovit.

And just thus it goes with us *Christians*. We Honor, we esteem *Jesus Christ* at a distance; but if He come near us, or begin to draw us near to himself; Oh! then we presently fly from him; we are asham'd of his Company; we find him troublesome to us. He appears all in Poverty, and we can esteem nothing but Riches and Plenty; He talks to us of Humiliations and Abjections, and we desire to be Esteem'd and Honor'd; He speaks of Sufferings and Mortifications, and we love nothing but our Ease and Pleasure.

Thus you see, we imitate the *Jews*; we honor *Jesus Christ* at a distance, but when he comes near us, we know him not; we esteem the Poverty of our *Saviour*, so long as it remains with him in the Stable; we admire and bless his Sufferings, his Mortifications, provided that he keep them close shut up with himself in the Manger; but if he bring any of his Poverty into our House, into our Family; if he communicate any share of his Sufferings to us; Oh! then we

are of another mind; then we find a thousand Reasons to disapprove of them; we have a thousand Pretences to excuse our selves from admitting of them.

Hence, at the same time that we seem to approve, we really disapprove of Christs Choice; we like, and dislike his Ways; we esteem, and condemn his Judgments. Whilst we only discourse of Things; whilst we speak of Him and his Proceedings, we are even ravish'd at this admirable conduct of his Wisdom. That our *God*, that our great *God* should become a *Child*; that He should be born in a *Stable*, lodg'd in a *Manger*; that He should come into the World after such a poor and humble manner. Oh! 'twas the most incomparable Method he could take, to cure the Wounds of our Soul; 'twas the wisest Choice he could make, to shew himself our *Saviour*.

But when He would apply this Remedy to us; when He would make the same Choice for us, which we so much approve of in him; Oh! then we are of another Judgment; then we do not stick to say, (at least by our Actions and Behavior,) we do not stick to say, *Christ* is deceiv'd; the eternal *Wisdom* of Hea-

ven is mistaken in the Choice he would make for us. *Christus fallitur*. Titles of Honor, Places of Respect, Worldly Dignities, Riches and Plenty, are much better for us; the World knowes best how to make a good Choice for us; the World is in the right; *Christ* is deceiv'd. *Christus fallitur, Mundus non errat*.

But, *Christians*, how then shall *Jesus Christ* be a Saviour to us? How shall he give *Glory* to *God*; or bring that *Peace* and *Joy* to *Men*, which you heard the *Angels* publish this Day? Must we desire this Divine *Infant* to return back again to *Heaven*; to take some new Instructions, to resolve on some new Counsels, some other Methods? Must we desire Him to come to us after another manner, than that we now behold him in? He thought this the most proper to glorify *God*, and save *Men*. His eternal Father is well pleased with it. He has sent down a multitude of *Angels* to expresse his Satisfaction: These Blessed *Spirits* no sooner beheld the Humility and Poverty of his *Birth*, but they presently sung *Glory to God*. And, I must tell you, all that desire to have any share in that *Peace* and *Joy*, they publish'd at the same time to *Men*, must be of the same Judgment: All that will be
sav'd

fav'd by Christ, must conform themselves to the Measures and Methods he has taken to be their Saviour. What He came from Heaven to teach, we must learn upon Earth: What *Jesus* did to save us, we must do to be sav'd by *Jesus*; which is what I am to discourse of in my Second Part.

Second Part.

'Tis hard to say, whether it be more astonishing, that *God* should not disdain to become like *Men*, or that *Men* should disdain to become like *God*? That *God* should come down from Heaven to teach *Men*, or that *Men* should be unwilling to learn of such a *Master*? That He should undertake to be their *Physician*, or that they should refuse to make use of his *Remedies*?

In the First Part of this Discourse, we have seen how *God* has made himself Little, Poor, and Abject; to teach us a Lesson of Humility, Poverty, and Mortification. We have seen also, how this heavenly *Physician* is come down to the Bed-side (as *St. Augustin* observes,) of sick Man; and He not only prescribes him *Remedies*, but also to make them

go down the easier, he first makes tryal of them himself. *Ad sanandum grandem Ægrotum descendit omnipotens Medicus; Humiliavit se usq; ad mortalem carnem, tanquam ad lectum Ægrotantis.*

Prior bibit Medicus sanus, ut bibere non dubitaret Ægrotus.

St. Aug. Serm. 59. de verbis dei.

But who is willing to practice the *Lessons* he teaches? Who is willing to apply the *Remedies* he prescribes? Which of you is resolv'd to make his Humility an Antidote against your Pride? Which of you is resolv'd to draw from his *Poverty*, a Motive to abate something of that *Vanity* in your Apparel; that *Superfluity* in your Furniture; that *Excess* in your Table? Let every one (say's *St. Bernard*;) examin himself, and see what Effect these powerful Remedies have wrought in him. *Cogitet unusquisq; quantum in eo operentur tam salutaria Medicamenta.*

But, Alas! my dear Brethren, is it not true, what the same Holy *Father* adds? Is it not true, that there are some Christians, to whom *Christ* is not yet born; who are not willing to be sav'd after the manner he has taken to be their *Saviour*; who are not really glad that *Christ* is come into the *VWorld*? *Sunt quibus nondum natus est Christus.*

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Luc. 2. 10.

The *Angels* were full of Joy at his Birth; and they made hast to communicate this good News to Men, to carry them the joyful Tydings, that their *Saviour* is born. *Evan-gelizo vobis gaudium magnum quia natus est vobis Salvator.*

But, *Christians*, are you glad to hear this good News? Is it a Joy to you, to hear your *Saviour* is born? Certainly, all that are in Misery, must needs be glad to hear of a *Saviour*: And methinks every one in this *Assembly*, speaks the Content of his Heart, by the joyful Air of his Countenance; every one seems well pleas'd to hear from the Angel, that our *Saviour* is born. But, *Christians*, are you glad (let me once more put the Question to you,) are you glad to have the *Infant Jesus* for your *Saviour*? Are you willing to be sav'd after the Method he has taken to be your *Saviour*?

I must then tell you plainly, He can no otherwife be a *Saviour* to you, than by taking out of your Heart that Pride, that Ambition, that Avarice, which have so long kept possession there: He cannot be your *Saviour*, (once more hear it) but by taking out of your Heart that love of the World, that love of Honor,

Honor, that love of Riches, that love of Pleasure, which has been so long *Master* of your Heart. And are you glad to hear of such a *Saviour*? Are you willing, that he should free you from those pleasing *Enemies* of your *Salvation*? Are you willing that he should tear from your Heart, those so long settl'd Affections? Are you willing that *Jesus Christ* should make a total Change, an entire Conversion, a thorough Reformation in your Soul? Are you willing that he should settle the same Judgments, the same Affections, the same Inclinations in you, which this Day you have seen appear in him? In a word, Are you willing that he should make you like himself, as he has made himself like you?

They that are not willing he should do this; they that will not permit him to do this, must look for some other *Saviour*; they must with the *Jews*, expect the coming of another *Messias*: The Divine *Child* of *Bethlehem*, is no *Saviour* for them; the *Infant Jesus* is not born for them: *Sunt quibus nondum natus est Christus*. He is a *Saviour*, because he's Humble; He is a *Saviour*, because he's Poor; He is a *Saviour*, because he Suffers. Who-soever will not partake of his Humility, of

his Poverty, of his Mortifications, shall have no share in his *Redemption*; He will be no *Saviour* to them. *Sunt quibus nondum natus est Christus.*

And what? Must then *Rich Men* divest themselves of all their *Possessions*? Must *Noble Men* turn their *Beds of State* into *Mangers*? Must *Kings* and *Queens* leave their *Thrones*, and retire into *Stables*, to partake of this *Days great Blessing*; to be sav'd by a *Messias*, who appears all in *Poverty* and *Humility*?

No, no *Christians*. The *Divine Child* of *Bethlehem*, whom this *Day* you see worship'd by poor *Shepherds*, twelve *Days* hence you will see ador'd by *Kings*. 'Tis not therefore the exterior Marks of Honor or Humility, of Plenty or Poverty, but the interior disposition of the Heart that he regards; 'tis Poverty of Spirit, 'tis Humility of Heart, that he requires in all those that will be sav'd by him. Alas! there are many, who under a poor and abject Appearance, cover ambitious and covetous Minds; who are still complaining, repining, and murmuring against *Providence*; and these *Persons*, tho they are poor and abject, yet have no comfort in the Poverty and Humility of the *Infant Jesus*. On the contrary, There are others, whom
God

God Almighty has plac'd in eminent *Stations*, who by the disposition of *Providence*, not by any ambition of their own Heart, are rais'd to high *Dignities*; who possess vast *Treasures*; but, as *St. Augustin* say's of them, amidst all the Honors and Poms of the World, conserve an humble Heart to God.

In superbo cultu cor Humile. Who, whilst they behold their *Saviour* in his Stable, look upon themselves with a holy kind of Contempt, to

St. Aug. Epist.
199.

see their Condition so different from his: In fine, who often pronounce in their Heart, what we read of the incomparable *Queen Hester*; who when She was at the heighth of all the Greatness and Glory a most powerful *Monarch* could raise her too, yet confidently told *Almighty God*, that He knew she was so far from taking any complacence in those Honors, that she rather submitted to them by Necessity, than affected them by Vanity.

Tu scis necessitatem meam, quod abominer signum Gloriæ meæ quod est super caput meum, in diebus ostentationis meæ.

Ester 14. 16.

To wear rich Apparel, to have a House well furnish'd, to receive the Respects and Submissions of Men, may be a decency due to the *Rank God Almighty* has plac'd you in;

(28)
but to take pride in those Honors, to delight in those fine Cloaths, to busie your Thoughts much about them, to set your Heart upon them, is a *Vanity* our *Saviour* condemns, by the Humility and Poverty of his Stable.

To be Great, to be Rich, may be a Blessing of *Heaven*; but to place ones Happiness in such things, to thirst vehemently after them, is that great, that general Crime of the World, which the whole Life and Doctrin of our *Saviour* was a condemnation of.

Those Persons therefore, whose Minds are always big with ambitious Designs, who are continually gaping after some new Preferment; whose Hands are open on all sides to receive Mony, who gripe all the Wealth that comes near them. Oh! these are they who have no share in that *Peace*, that *Joy*, which our *New born Saviour* brought this Day into the World.

How much then are they deceiv'd in their Devotion, who, because they were present last Night at the Divine *Office*; because they heard the Three *Masses*; because they receiv'd the Blessed *Sacrament*; therefore think they have done all that is requisit to honor this great *Feast*? Alas! all this is but the exterior

rior of this Days *Devotion*. The true Honor due to this *Solemnity*, is the disengaging of our Heart from the love of this World: 'Twas for this, that *Christ* was born in a *Stable*; 'twas for this, that he came down from *Heaven*, that (as the *Apostle* speaks,) he might *disengage us from this wicked World; that we might renounce all Impiety, and worldly Desires.*

Whosoever therefore will cherish in his Heart any of those Desires, any of those Passions which *Christ* came to free us from, will find no comfort in the *Birth* of his *Saviour*. No, no, *St. Bernard* tells us plainly and truly, The poor *Stable* of *Bethlehem*, will afford no comfort to those that set their Hearts on *Riches*; *Christ's* low and humble *Manger*, will afford no comfort to those that aspire at *Titles of Honor*, high *Places of Pre-ferment*; His poor *Swadling Bands*, will afford no comfort to those that delight in fine *Cloaths*. *Non consolantur panni ejus ambulantes in stolis, non consolatur præsepe & stabulum, amantes primas Cathedras in Synagogis.*

*St. Bern. Serm.
de Nativ.*

Those Persons also, that live always out of themselves, that will be always abroad, always in Company and Entertainments, neither will they find any comfort in the *Solitude*

St. Bern. Serm.
5. de Nativitate.

tude and *Silence* of the *Infant Jesus*; they that will be always in Mirth and Jollity, will find no comfort in the Tears of this weeping *Babe*. *Non consolatur Christi Infantia garrulos, non consolantur Christi lacrymæ cachinantes.*

No, no, *Christians*; They that will find comfort in *Jesus*, must not seek it in things which he banish'd far from himself. Riches, Honors, Plays, Divertisements and great Entertainments, are not to be found in his *Stable*; and therefore, who sets his Heart on these things, will never find Content in his *New-born Saviour*.

You know well, two Persons can never live easily together; they can never find Satisfaction in each other; they can never make up a lasting *Friendship*, unless they be something alike in their Judgments, in their Humors and Ways. You see what are the Ways of the *Infant Jesus*; you see his *Humor*, his Inclination is to be in *Solitude* and *Silence*. 'Tis for this, that He chose rather to be born in the *Fields* than Town of *Berthehem*, that he might be far from the Noise and Disturbances of this busie World; 'tis for this, that the public *Inns* were no place of abode for him; He chose rather to lye in a *Stable*, than
not

not to be in *Retirement*. Whosoever therefore desires to make up a *Friendship* with him, must be of the same Humor; he must sometimes withdraw himself from the Conversation of *Men*, and noise of worldly *Affairs*, if he will enjoy the company of *Jesus* in his solitary *Stable*.

You see also what is his Opinion, what Judgment he makes of Things, what Spirit predominates in Him: You see, he esteems Poverty, Humility, Lowliness, Mortification. Whosoever pretends to be his Friend, must be of the same Opinion, the same Judgment; he must be acted by the same Spirit: For the *Apostle* tells us plainly, He that has not this Spirit of *Christ*, do's not belong to *Christ*; he cannot be one of his Friends. *Si quis non habet Spiritum Christi, hic non est ejus.*

Christians! Do you rightly apprehend this terrible Expression of the *Apostle*? Reflect a little on it. Not to belong to *Jesus Christ!* to have no share in his *Friendship!* to have no part in that *Peace* and *Joy*, which he brought this Day into the World! Oh God! what a dismal Sentence is this? *Si quis non habet Spiritum Christi, hic non est ejus.*

He that has not his Spirit of *Humility*, his
Spirit

Spirit of Poverty, his *Spirit of Mortification*; he do's not belong to *Christ*. *Non est ejus.*

Examin therefore well your Hearts; see whether you have this *Spirit of Christ*, and that you may not be deceiv'd; (for alas! the Heart of Man, is an *Abyfs* of Darknefs: They that are continually searching into it by their most serious Considerations, and pious Meditations, have difficulty enough to discover the secret Springs, and hidden Sourse of that Pride, Avarice and Ambition, which lye deep rooted in our Nature). Therefore, that you may not be deceiv'd in the *Judgment* you make of your Heart, observe how you behave your selves in the Occasions and Tryals your *Saviour* gives you of manifesting his *Spirit*, of imitating his *Humility* and *Poverty*. When therefore, you see others preferr'd before you; when you see them rais'd to great Honors, and your self neglected and unregarded: If you repine and murmur at this; when God Almighty takes away some temporal Advantage from you; when he lessens your Riches by such Misfortunes as he permits to fall upon you. If you are transported with Trouble and Disquiet of Mind; 'tis a terrible sign, that your esteem of his
Humility

Humility and Poverty, was only in Fancy and Imagination; 'tis an evident mark, that your Heart is strongly ty'd to the Honors and Riches of this World; 'tis a convincing proof, that you are govern'd by some other *Spirit* than that of *Christ*; that you are guided by other *Maxims*, than those he preaches from his *Manger*.

Alas! Dear Christians, *Jesus* was rich; and he became thus poor for our sakes, that he might quench in our Hearts that ardent Thirst we have after Riches. He was at the height of Honor, Glory and Greatness; and he has made himself thus Little and Abject, that he might beget in us a contempt of all worldly Greatness. He was incapable of suffering any thing in his own *Nature*; and he has taken ours, that he may suffer in all Kinds; and thereby give us an *Example* of Penance and Mortification.

*Propter nos
egenus factus
est, cum esset di-
ves. 2 Cor. 8.*

Let us awaken then (dear *Christians*); Let us awaken out of that Dream, which the *Father* of Lyes has so long deluded us with: Let us withdraw our Thoughts from those Impressions, which Custom and Opinion, the Principles and Practice of the World have impos'd upon us: Let us leave the World

to think, and speak according to its Rules and Maxims. But for us that are *Christians*, let us govern our selves by the Maxims of *Christ*; let us hearken to him, who is come from Heaven to be our *Master*: And no where do's he teach us more efficaciously, than in the *Mystery* of this Days *Solemnity*. The *Stable* of *Bethlehem*, is the proper *School* of *Christians*; the *Manger*, is the *Pulpit* from which this great *Evangelist* first began to preach to the *World*.

Let us therefore often enter into this *School*; let us draw near to this *Pulpit*; let us hearken to this divine *Preacher*. He is Silent, but every thing (as *St. Bernard* observes,) has a Voice; every thing Preaches: His *Stable* preaches, his *Manger* preaches, his *Swaddling-Cloaths* preach; his *Tears* preach, his very *Silence* preaches. *Clamat Stabulum, clamat præsepe, clamant panni, clamant lacrymæ, ipsa Infantilia membra clamant; & quid clamant?* And what is't they preach? They preach *Humility*, *Poverty*, *Penance*, *Mortification*, contempt of all worldly *Riches*, *Pleasures* and *Honors*. *Clamant Humilitatem, Paupertatem, Pœnitentiam, contemptum Opum, Deliciarum, & commodorum Mundi.*

*St. Bern. Serm.
5. de Nativitate.*

St. Bern. ibid.

These

These are the great Lessons *Christ* preaches from his *Manger*; these are the important Instructions, *Christians* must learn from this divine *Master*. By this, we shall joyn with the Angels in giving *Glory* to God, and fit our selves for that *Peace*, which God is come to give to Men. This *Peace* is the great Blessing our *New-born Saviour* has brought us from Heaven; the greatest Happiness we can enjoy here upon Earth; and an Earnest of that eternal *Peace* and *Joy*, we hope to find hereafter in *Heaven*. Which God of his infinit Goodness bestow on your Sacred Majesty, and all this Pious Assembly. *Amen*.

F I N I S.
